

Wolfman by MonsterSquad

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Relationships: Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler

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Summary:

The only thing that keeps him grounded when the moon is full is the voice of the girl who always reads her books aloud. Based on the song "Wolfman" by Adam Dale.

1. Chapter 1

Cresting the hill the way he always did, his chest felt lighter as he spied the small cabin nestled in the forest. He could see the soft yellow glow of her lantern spilling through the open window. It was always that way and it always made him feel instantly more at peace. His feet carried him closer without engaging his brain; his brain wasn't capable of holding more than a couple of solid thoughts in his current state but something about the cabin drew him and as he got closer he could hear her voice.

The full moon overhead provided light but he could have made his way there in total blackness; his senses overloaded by the lunar pull. It mocked him and made him into something else and despite how he tried nothing made him feel as normal as hearing the voice of the girl in the cabin.

The first time it had happened he had been an angry mess, barreling through the trees, gnashing at anything that came close to him. As he got nearer to the little cabin his one thought was of carnage but upon getting closer he could hear her reading aloud from the living room. He edged himself closer to the open window but was content to just sit underneath it and listen to her read.

He was touched by the sadness in her voice and yet she still sounded like the sweetest melody he would ever hear. He knew then that he would never bite her; that he would allow himself to be carried away in chains rather than harm her. She was like an elixir or an antidote, bringing his real feelings back to the surface instead of the rage that was brought on by his illness.

And his illness, how he had come to hate that! At first it wasn't a

bother to him. He acted upon his natural urges that came along with it but once he had noticed the girl, and once he had listened to her read, he knew that he was in love. He had fallen in love without ever seeing her face. Listening to her sad and sweet voice was enough. From his place outside the window he would fight back tears as his agony over his predicament grew. He knew she could never love him and yet he didn't want to stop going to hear her read every month. He had become smitten with her and the more he listened to her the more he hated the disease that turned him into a monster. His agony and his love for her danced together as she read and he realized that he had never even looked through the open window, so afraid that she might see him.

“Hey, babe? Where are those jeans you were wearing last week?” El asked from the laundry room.

Mike slinked into the small room. “Um, I don't remember. I'm sorry.” He looked like a puppy with his tail between his legs and El's heart almost broke. She walked to him and wrapped her arms around his waist.

“It's okay. We can get a new pair. Don't get upset about it. Clothes aren't important. *You are* what's important to me.” She smiled up at him, beckoning him to kiss her. It was true that they went through this same conversation a lot but it was also true that her answer would always be the same. Mike would always be more important to her than any material goods.

“How do you keep loving me with all the problems I cause? I don't

deserve it. I hate it that I start to forget things. I never want to forget you. You are all I care about.” Mike hugged her tightly, more for himself than for her. He *needed* her and it scared him that he needed her so much.

“No matter what will ever happen, it will always be easy for me to love you, Mike.”

She could tell the signs by now, she knew when the fogginess in his brain would start to set in. It was like a clock that only she could read. It saddened her greatly but she had vowed to always keep watch, to always be his bastion and protector.

And as the thing she had come to dread drew closer each month she had to watch as Mike started to pull away from her. The days before the moon he wouldn't be able to recognize her and then he'd be gone. The pain was almost unbearable but El had to be strong. All of her worry she channeled into reading. She would sit up and wait, month after month.

But it wasn't all bad. They had been living together for a few years and they had a lot of good times. They had some *great* times. When Mike was himself he was as sharp and witty as ever, reminding El of why she had fallen in love with him in the first place. One month he surprised her and made her very happy. She had waited for it but never thought it would happen, especially with his new illness, but at the heart of everything Mike was still *Mike* and he never failed to be able to touch her soul, to be the most thoughtful and best person she had ever met.

And then the next morning he was gone. She'd known he would be. Her heart was riddled with scar tissue but still so full of love.

Darkness fell and the forest that surrounded the cabin basked in the light of the full moon overhead. In the distance could be heard a mournful howl. El began to read aloud. She had exhausted her supply of Tolkien and after attempting to read *Watership Down* and *Charlotte's Web* and finding that both texts caused her to sob, she decided to start Stephen King's series *The Dark Tower*. She had made it to book three, *The Waste Lands*, and thought the story was really getting good. She pulled her knees up, folding her legs underneath her as she sat in her favorite reading chair. There was a fire in the fireplace tonight as the autumn air had turned chilly but she wanted to leave the window open. She would always leave the window open.

A beastly figure approached the cabin as stealthily as he could. He could hear her reading already and his heart sped up. It was a new story, he realized, and he was eager to let her take him on the journey with her. He had decided that tonight he would try to look through the window, just to get a peek at the girl whose voice gave him hope. He crouched below the window sill and listened to her like he always did. Slowly he let himself stand, making sure that he would still be in the shadows.

She was sitting in an armchair and she looked happy. She actually looked *happy*. Her voice had always seemed so sad but now it had a slightly more confident quality and a joy to it. It was no less appealing to him. She flipped through the pages as she read, her voice animated and enthralled in the tale she was telling. Her left hand flicked and something on her finger caught the light in the room.

He looked down at himself. He could feel tears stinging his eyes as he observed the changes to his body. Anywhere his flesh had been was covered in coarse hair, his nails were claws. He felt embarrassed and hopeless and exhausted and *alone*. Hearing her read quelled his demons but that didn't mean that his appetite was any easier to control. Hearing her was the only thing that kept him in check. He felt like it was his only tether to the real world. It was frightening to think that the only thing keeping him at least a little bit human was the angelic voice of the tiny girl reading her book aloud.

Feeling overwhelmed by the idea of his own monstrosity and the thought of never being able to be with the woman he loved, he ran away into the forest. His tears were flowing now and he no longer fought them. He found the highest peak he could and wailed at the moon, his lamentation could be heard for miles.

She heard him as well and she stopped reading. She had felt happy but upon hearing his sadness, a tear rolled down her cheek. Her lower lip quivered. She could feel his pain.

El was awakened by the sound of birds chirping. She had fallen asleep in the chair. She had cried for a little while but then started reading again, wanting to remain an anchor. She stretched, pulling herself from the weird position she had fallen asleep in. The fire in the fireplace had died. She winced as her feet hit the cold floor of the cabin. El crossed to the window to close it.

She reached to close the window and was frozen in place at what she saw. On the ground underneath the window sill lay Mike, sleeping still. Her heart skipped a beat as he opened his eyes. He was handsome and cold, charmingly stunned. He looked slightly

confused but when his eyes met hers he seemed to soften.

Mike looked down at his naked body, examining himself, seeing only flesh there. His feet were muddy and his legs were scraped but he felt like himself. He looked up at El and sighed heavily. It was over for another month. He had been saved by her eloquence and loyalty.

And El had been saved by her husband's safe return.

2. Chapter 2

Europe had been a blast right up until that last night there. Mike Wheeler had been walking from the pub back to his little hotel when he heard someone calling his name. He turned and in the alleyway he was passing was a guy he recognized from work. They had been sent across the ocean together to scout the location that was Bran Castle, their company wanted to recreate the attraction in the United States, capitalizing on patrons' love of vampire lore.

"Hey, Mike!" The voice called out to him. It was dark in the alleyway and although Mike could see that it was indeed his colleague from work, he somehow looked different. The light of the full moon made his features seem elongated and more shadowy. But Mike went to him anyway.

"What are you doing back here, man? You're gonna get stabbed." Mike chuckled. His laughter didn't last long though when his colleague, a man he'd had drinks with and played pool with and had laughed with, lunged at him, biting him on the shoulder. The pain was intense. His jacket and shirt were both ripped. He grappled with the man, thinking crazily to himself that the guy had somehow gotten a lot taller, and was he hairier too? Luckily for Mike, a few seconds later a sizeable crowd of men who were roaming from pub to pub walked past the alleyway, talking loudly and laughing. Mike's colleague seemed to stiffen and then he ran away through the back of the alley.

Mike was so confused. What had just happened? His shoulder stung and he winced as his fingers went to inspect the damage. It was definitely a bite but his skin was ragged there, like it had been shredded. He walked quickly back to his hotel, wanting a shower. He felt weak and clammy but he figured it was because of the adrenaline.

That had been almost a year ago. Mike now knew what he was, and he knew what would happen to him every month. For some reason he would forget things as the time drew nearer but he always remembered everything up until his mind started to get foggy. He tried to have a sense of humor about it, joking to himself that only he could go to a place famous for vampires and come back a werewolf. It didn't make him laugh much though.

It was near the beginning of the moon's cycle when he met El for the first time. He had been in the bookstore looking for a book to take his mind off of himself. He must have looked lost because as he searched the shelves he heard a small voice from behind him.

"Looking for something in particular?" She asked. Mike spun around.

Standing a little behind him was a girl almost a foot shorter than him, with honey brown hair and large eyes that invited him to tell her his every secret.

"Um, I'm just looking for something, like fantasy? I'm not really sure what I want actually."

"Hmm, maybe I could help you. I don't work here but I love to read. So fantasy? Like dragons or like vampires and werewolves? Or something else?" She looked thoughtful and Mike's heart sped up.

"Definitely not werewolves," Mike said.

“Oh no? Why not? I think werewolves are very interesting. They aren’t all bad. Take for example *The Talisman* by Stephen King and Peter Straub. Those wolves are protectors. You definitely want a Wolf around, right here and now!” She laughed.

“I don’t get it,” Mike said.

“It’s from the book. It’s really one of my favorites. You should read it. If you aren’t into werewolves don’t worry, they aren’t the main characters. They are awesome though. I’d love to have a friend like that. Oh, my name is El, by the way.”

“I’m Mike. You really think the wolves in that book are good?” Mike asked, his interest bubbling since she’d said they were good wolves.

“No, I know they are. Just read it, Mike. If you don’t like it I’ll buy you dinner.” El maintained eye contact, wanting to gauge his reaction to her offer.

Mike suddenly felt nicely warm. “Well, what if I *do* like it?”

“Then dinner’s on you.” El winked at him and Mike was lost beyond hope.

And that was how they met. They spent all of their time together and even though he was having so much fun getting to know her and

even though they had shared almost every secret each of them had, Mike had held something back. As the days passed though, he knew he'd have to finally tell her.

El was pretty smitten with the boy whom she'd met in the bookstore, but her fear of messing up what they had outweighed her boldness and she couldn't bring herself to tell him how she felt. She was already thinking about him constantly even just a few days after they met. She told herself to slow down but it was no use. Her mind was completely occupied by one Mike Wheeler. It made her happy to think about him.

She had seemed quiet one day and even though she smiled and they talked, Mike could tell that something was on her mind. She had gone to Mike's apartment because they were going to watch television and hang out. They had labeled themselves as friends, both secretly too scared to admit anything, and acted as such. On that day though, El was different.

"Is everything okay?" Mike asked. El was sitting on his sofa toying with a tassel on a throw pillow. She sighed.

"I think I need to talk to you about something," she started. Mike could see that she was hesitant.

"What is it? You know you can tell me. We've told each other practically everything." Mike tried to make her feel better, wanting her to know she could trust him.

"I don't know what it is, or why, and you may even want to totally

forget I'm telling you this," El took a deep breath.

"Wait, before you say anything else, does this have something to do with *me*?" Mike asked.

"Maybe." El's hands trembled.

"Okay, I may be a little crazy assuming this but if this is what I think it is...God, my heart is pounding right now," Mike admitted. He could see that El was visibly shaking. "I mean, I don't know how exactly it is for you but I feel something too. Unless I'm being really stupid right now and that's not what you wanted to talk about at all."

"No, it is. We are on the same page. I like you. Like, a *lot*." The revelation made her feel instantly better. Even if Mike didn't feel the same way it was nice to have it out in the open.

"Um, I like you too, El. A lot. But there's something you don't know about me and it could change how you think about me. I don't know if I'm ready for that. I like having you in my life." Mike scooted closer to her on the sofa.

"You know you can tell me anything but you can wait until you're ready. There's nothing you can say that will change my mind." El took his hand.

Mike was quiet. The days were indeed counting down now. He

knew he'd have to explain why he disappeared and he really didn't want to lie to her. If she didn't want anything more to do with him he would understand. He'd be sad but he ultimately wanted what was best for her.

"El, I...there's something about me, something wrong with me, and I just think you should never have to deal with it. I like you so much but I feel like you deserve someone better than me. Someone who can give you everything. At first I thought it was cool to have a friend I felt so open with, someone I could say absolutely anything to. You have no idea how much I needed that. But the more time I spend with you the more I realize that it isn't just friendship I want at all and I think that's selfish of me."

El looked at Mike, not realizing that she was squeezing his hand tighter.

"Mike, what is it?"

Mike sighed but squeezed her hand back. He hung his head and he looked at their entwined hands.

"I...I'm a werewolf. I got bitten when I was in Europe, I thought the guy was my friend, and for almost a year now every month when the moon is full I turn into one. I try to stay out in the forest to minimize any damage I might do. But there have been a couple of accidents. I can't lie, I can't always keep it in check. It makes me sick to think of the carnage I've caused."

El gasped but Mike pressed on.

“I’d kill myself if I ever hurt you. And El, I can’t have kids. I’d pass along something awful and I know we just said we like each other but I need you to know that I can’t give you everything. I’ll never be able to.” Mike’s last sentence came out as a whisper.

El wasn’t sure of what she believed but she knew she definitely *did* believe that Mike thought he was a werewolf. She could see the tears in his eyes as he told her his story. She wanted to hold him and tell him everything was going to be okay. She felt no fear upon his admission. If anything, she felt more strongly for him.

“Mike, look at me.” El’s finger went to his chin and she gently turned his head toward her. “I still feel the same way. So you’re a werewolf? I don’t mind. You’re still *you* and I like you. So much. I don’t want you to be alone in this.”

“The moon will be full in a few days. I wanted you to know before I disappear. I’ll start forgetting things too, probably in the next couple of days, so please don’t think I’m ignoring you. It’s just what happens. I’ll be back to normal soon.” Mike still sounded timid, still not believing she hadn’t bolted for the door.

“Where do you go when it happens? The forest you say? My dad has a cabin and if you wanted, I could stay there and you’d have somewhere to come if you got scared or when it was over. I want to be there for you. We could go there today and spend the next few days until you’re back to your normal Mike self.”

“You’d do that for me? Why?”

“Because I’d do anything for you, Mike.”

The buds on the trees were just beginning to open up, signaling the arrival of spring, as El and Mike drove to her father’s cabin. It had been a quiet journey. El’s heart felt heavy because she didn’t know what she could do to make him feel better. Every instinct she had told her to try to make him feel less alone.

“Will I be able to see you change?” El asked.

“Um, I’ll start forgetting, you’ll feel me pull away probably, and then I’ll go into the forest. I don’t want to scare you so I’d rather you not see me. You’ll probably hear me though. I’m always sad and I howl at the moon.”

El frowned, not because he didn’t want her to see his wolf form, but because he sounded so sad. She wanted to make his sadness go away.

“Here we are,” El said as she pulled up to a quaint little cabin surrounded by the springtime forest. “Make yourself at home. If it’s only a day together then it’s only a day but I’ll be here the entire time. I’ll wait for you to come back. I know you won’t remember while you’re out there but I hope if you pass this place it makes you feel less alone.” El hugged him.

Mike thought he might melt. She was being so sincere and so sweet and he was just a wolfman who didn't deserve her at all, at least that's what he thought.

El thought otherwise, though didn't voice it to Mike at the time. She didn't need everything. She had thought about it and being with someone who could give her everything didn't really appeal to her if it meant she wasn't with Mike. She thought she could have nothing and still be happy as long as she had him. She made a mental note to tell him when he wasn't feeling so downhearted.

It turned out that they had two days before Mike started showing the signs. They had gotten closer in those two days and El knew that what she was feeling was definitely not some little crush but there were more pressing matters at hand. On the second day he had kissed her and El felt herself fall even harder. Their conversation surrounding the kiss had been hushed and intimate.

"I'm going to worry so much about you when you're out there," El said quietly, her face just millimeters from Mike's.

"I'll come back to you. I promise. You're my favorite." And then Mike had kissed her and she had lost track of time and could barely speak for a few minutes afterward but couldn't remember a time when she was so happy.

But when she awoke on the third day at the cabin, Mike was nowhere to be found. He had warned her that he'd disappear. So El spent the day tidying the place. She cooked a couple of racks of ribs on her dad's smoker out back, knowing full well that she was going to leave them outside for Mike in case he came near.

As the sun set and the moon above became clearly visible, El sat out on the back porch. All she could do was think about Mike, think about what he thought of himself and how she saw him so much differently. She wished she could make him see what she saw. It didn't matter to her that there was something wrong with him because all the things that were *right* with him were so much more important. She couldn't say it yet but she knew what she felt.

In the distance she heard a wolf howl. El went back inside the little cabin and opened the window. She sat down in the chair and took her book from the side table.

"Come back soon, Mike. I miss you already." El said, looking to the window. Then she began to read aloud from her book.

On September 15th, 1981, a boy named Jack Sawyer stood where the water and land come together, hands in the pockets of his jeans, looking out at the steady Atlantic...

Notes for the Chapter:

Originally this was going to be just a one-shot but I had requests to make it longer so I'm going to do a few chapters of snippets of their life together. I know I've been gone for a bit but I've been wonderfully distracted. I'll try to keep writing though. I don't personally think this chapter is all that great but the next one should have some more action, or at least more angst, so hopefully it will be better. Thanks so much for reading!

Author's Note:

I just loved the song and wanted to Milevenize it. It's sad. I love melancholy.